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ABSTRACT

Bilingual literacy methods and materials used in Mexico for its linguistic minorities can also be used effectively in the United States. A system based on the techniques of Paulo Freire is being used in that country to create beginning reading materials in all the native languages of Mexico. In this method, generative words concerning foods, holidays, or practical aspects of adult life are discussed and carefully arranged from basic phonetic sounds to more complicated sounds (17 words can express all of the 24 sounds of Spanish). Students who are still deficient in basic skills but too advanced for Freire's method are taught Spanish skills while they learn English. A system, based on the generative word concept and an educational notebook discussed by Freire, was developed to teach English as a second language while reinforcing the primary language. First, problem areas are identified through evaluation of student essays and an error list is compiled, from which generative themes are developed. After discussion of the themes, students construct a list of common words that reflect the concept being taught, write a paragraph, and then discuss the theme, this time in English. Finally, a paragraph is written in English. Both the modified Freire and the generative theme methods are based on the premise that thinking and discussion precede the processes of reading and writing. (HTH)

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THE MEXICAN APPROACH OF DEVELOPING MATERIALS AND TEACHING LITERACY TO BILINGUAL STUDENTS

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Paulo Freire's approach to adult literacy is reviewed. This approach consists of indentifying generative words which have special meanings to the learner and then codifying the syllables of the words to create new words. With just seventeen words, all of the sounds of Spanish can be taught. The Instituto Nacional Indigenista has modified Freire's approach for use with school aged children. The modification consists of using a formal textbook with pictures and using generative words concerning food, holidays, work, and animals. These textbooks are being created for the 125-150 linguistic minorities which reside in Mexico. This system can be used with any phonetic language.

Students who have completed one or two years of education in the native country and a year of English as a second language are too advanced for either Freire's system or the Mexican adaptation. Another adaptation of the generative word concept is presented. This adaptation helps to improve native language skills while concentrating on the teaching of English.

THE MEXICAN APPROACH OF DEVELOPING MATERIALS AND TEACHING LITERACY TO BILINGUAL STUDENTS

Mexico's approach to the development of bilingual literacy methods and materials can be used effectively in the United States with many of the seventy-two linguistic minorities recognized by the United States Department of Education. Educators can learn a tremendous amount from Mexico because there are between 125 and 150 linguistic minorities for whom the Mexican government is creating materials in the native languages. Through the Ministry of Education and the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), workbooks and teaching techniques based on the works of Paulo Freire have been developed.(10) These methods and materials have a direct application in the United States for the teaching of literacy in phonetic languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. In order to understand the process, a rationale will be presented for the teaching of literacy in the native language. Also, the method of developing and using literacy materials for adults and primary school aged children will be explained. Finally, a modification of this system designed to improve native language skills while teaching English as a second language will be presented.

The Teaching of Literacy in the Native Language

There is an increasing amount of evidence which indicates that literacy should be taught first in the primary

language of the speaker. Lambert and Tucker in Canada (6), Modiano in Mexico (9), and Zappert and Cruz's(11) analysis of studies in the United States have all shown the importance of teaching in the primary language and then transferring these early reading skills into second language learning. After controlling for socioeconomic status, Lambert and his colleagues have demonstrated greater gains in second language learning by utilizing the primary language as the vehicle of instruction. (6)

Gaarder (4:52-53) cites three reasons why teaching in the primary language of the student is effective:

1. Children who enter school with less competence than English speaking children may become retarded in their schoolwork to the extent of their deficiency in English if English is the sole medium of instruction. On the other hand, the bilingual child's conceptual development and acquisition of other experience and information could proceed at a normal rate if the mother tongue were used as an alternative medium of instruction.
2. Non-English speaking children come from non-English speaking homes. The use of the child's mother tongue by some of the teachers and as a school language is necessary if there is to be a strong mutually reinforcing relationship between the home and the school.
3. Language is the most important manifestation of the self, of the human personality. If the school rejects the mother tongue of an entire group of

children, it can be expected to affect seriously and adversely those children's concept of their parents, their homes, and themselves.

Learning to read in the native language is beneficial because the learner brings many reading behaviors to the learning of the second language. The learner understands left to right progression, vowels, consonants, blends, diphthongs, the concepts of words, phrases, sentences, and punctuation. As the student masters the primary language, more and more skills can be transferred to the second language.

William Gray stated that the greater the phoneme-grapheme correspondence, the easier it is to learn to read. (5:64) For example, in Spanish there are twenty-nine letters and twenty-four sounds whereas in English there are twenty-four letters and forty-three sounds. It is difficult to imagine the frustration first felt by the illiterate Spanish speaker who was taught to read and write in English. In fact, this phoneme-grapheme mismatch may present problems for native speakers of English and many reading authorities have tried to simplify this relationship with such programs as the Initial Teaching Alphabet and Words in Color. (1:141)

Developing Literacy Materials

The United States Department of Education recognizes seventy-two languages under Title VII. There are not enough materials available in each of these languages and, therefore, materials must be created. Nancy Modiano, who is employed by the Instutito Nacional Indigenista, wrote a manual on how to

create this type of material for the Indians of Mexico. (8) This system is being used to create beginning reading materials in all of the native languages, and is based on the techniques of Paulo Freire.(2) The first step is to identify generative words. In Freire's system these words are meaningful to adults and tend to be political in nature. For younger children, Modiano believes the words should be more basic. These words should be concrete and include such things as food, holidays, the work of adults, and animals. For adults, the practical aspects of life are recommened. The words must always reflect the real world of the students and the practice of using pictures of just lawyers, doctors, and other professional people to motivate all types of students should be avoided.

The words are carefully arranged from basic phonetic sounds to more complicated sounds. If done correctly, seventeen words can express all of the sounds of Spanish. Slides and pictures are prepared to illustrate the meaning of the words. This material must always be within the context of the learner.

The class begins when the teacher introduces one of the words. A discussion is held on the meaning of the word. Next, the word is divided into syllables. In addition, the phonemic family of the first syllable of the word is presented. (For example, co-mi-da: ca, ce, ci, co, cu.) This is done next with the other two syllables so that a discovery card can be made:

ca	ce	ci	co	cu
ma	me	mi	mo	mu
da	de	di	do	du

The students then create new words. These new words are discussed at the next session. During the remaining sessions the group works through the remaining words. After six weeks of this method, a group can develop enough skill to read newspapers, read and write simple letters, and discuss problems of local and national importance.(7)

The Mexicans use Freire's system in a very formalized manner. Teachers from the Indian group, for whom a primer is being created, identify the generative words. Next, a beginning reading book is created with each lesson containing a picture, the word in syllables, and a short story under the word. Modiano uses the following example in Spanish to illustrate the first three lessons of a beginning reading book in Spanish: (8)

I
MI COMIDA

II
COMO CAMOTE
COMO CAMOTE CON SAL
COMO CAMOTE CON SALSA

III
ME GUSTA EL CAMOTE
ME GUSTA LA SAL
ME GUSTA MI COMIDA

In the first three lessons, only three consonants and three vowels are presented. Figure 1 illustrates the lesson in the beginning reading primer. After discussing the words, the students recombine the syllables into a possible forty new words. Each of these words is discussed,

como camote.
como camote con sal.
como camote con salsa.

co	mo	ca	mo	te	sal	sa

Maestro, invite a sus alumnos a recombinar a las sílabas y letras para hacer otras palabras.

Figure 1

Sample Page from Modiano's "Como hacer una cartilla"

and the next lesson is presented. From a technical standpoint, Modiano stated that there should be three pages for each symbol of the language; therefore, if there are twenty sounds, there should be sixty pages of text. The format is extremely important. Only capital letters and pictures that are easily identifiable are used at first.

A System for Teaching English and Spanish

Freire's system works best with teenagers and adult illiterates. Modiano's system is excellent for elementary school aged children. Students who have completed one or two years of education in the native country and a year of English as a Second Language are still deficient in basic skills, but are too advanced for either Freire's or Modiano's system. For these students, it becomes important to improve Spanish language skills while teaching English. The methodology to accomplish this goal is suggested in Paulo Freire's Pedagogy in Process (3:69). Freire discussed a notebook of popular education which has been used in Guinea-Bissau. The notebook, in the second stage, provides places in which to write about the "generative theme." Through discussion and writing, meaning is intensified. Based upon this concept, a system was developed to teach English as a second language while reinforcing the primary language. The system is based upon the following premises:

1. Discussions must precede written assignments
2. The lessons must be designed to motivate the students

3. The program must be supplemented with basic English vocabulary, oral reading in both English and Spanish, language drills, dictation, and oral questioning.

Item three contains the materials and techniques found in any good language arts program and thus will not be discussed in this paper.

The first aspect of the system is to identify problem areas. This is done by asking the students to write a paragraph in the primary language. The paragraph topic should be of interest to the students and might include such things as the customs of the homeland, differences in food, or comments on various holidays. The papers are corrected and a master list of errors is compiled. In the early stages of the program, the list only contains substitutions or omission errors, such as ll and y, or omission of the initial h. Errors of gender and accent should be handled later and the list should be revised on a periodic basis. From the list, generative themes are developed. The word or group of words must focus on the error and be of interest to the students. Some examples of generative themes are as follows:

error	themes
s & c	justicia
ll & y	Yo llamaba cuando
z & c	zodiaco
h (omission)	heroes
b & v	Mi barrio es mi vida

First, the students discuss the generative theme in the native language. It is important that each student comments on his/her view of the theme. In a discussion about justicia, students might include such ideas as inflation and how it affects the poor, problems with the police, problems with fighting on campus, or the migrants from Mexico.

Second, the students help to construct a list of common words that reflect the concept being taught. Twenty words are sufficient. For the b and v problem, the phrase "Mi barrio es mi vida" can be used and the following spelling words can be taught:

b	v
cabeza	velocidad
bienvenida	verano
botica	vocabulario
barrio	vacación
basura	vacuna
ballena	veterinario
bandolero	voy
bandera	verdad
borracho	vergüenza
cobija	ventana

The word list should be supplemented with a word list in English such as the Dolch list. Weekly tests are given with words in both English and Spanish

The third aspect of the program concerns the writing of a paragraph in Spanish based on the discussion. Each student is expected to write a paragraph. Short papers are encouraged in the beginning and longer papers are accepted as students increase their skills in the writing of Spanish.

The fourth aspect of the program is a discussion in English on the topic. Since the students unde-stand the topic in Spanish, full attention can be focused on creating English sentences. All students must comment on the topic in English. The papers written in Spanish are available in case the students have forgotten details about the topic.

Lastly, the students write a paragraph in English on the topic. A translation of the Spanish paper is acceptable or the paper may include other thoughts. Both papers are corrected and the students rewrite them. If pressures become too great, teachers can alternate the rewriting assignments, i.e., one week Spanish and one week English.

The process should take a total of three days. These three days need not be sequential because the students are always working from prepared notes. As a variation, the students can exchange papers and read them to each other. It is essential that groups be formed to discuss the concepts.

Summary

The Mexican approach to literacy for bilinguals and the modified approach to teaching English as a second language while reinforcing primary language skills are both based on the philosophical premise that thinking and discussions precede the processes of reading and writing. Both techniques demand the creation of generative words, themes, and materials which are interesting and are an integral part of the lives of students. Using these two approaches, the

teacher becomes a facilitator in helping students with the complicated tasks of primary literacy learning and literacy learning in a second language.

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